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FYI

Religious liberty—To oppose "spiritual intimidation" by the Christian right, a new Protestant-Catholic-Jewish ecumenical church group called the Interfaith Alliance says it will oppose the use of "spiritual litmus tests" in the 1994 election campaign.

Arguing that the radical right, led by the Rev. Pat Robertson's $20-million-a-year Christian Coalition, claims to "uniquely speak for people of faith" and insists that "God is on their side," the interfaith group hopes to raise $4 million to say that there is "an alternative religious voice in America." Only the Democrats have pledged so far, but both major political parties as well as individuals are being asked for support.

The chairman of the Interfaith Alliance is the Rev. Herbert Alexander, head of the Baltimore Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). He says that right-wing fundamentalist groups like the Christian Coalition "pose a serious threat to American principles of tolerance and liberty." For information, write the Interfaith Alliance, 1511 K Street NW, Room 738, Washington, DC 20005.

That's rehabilitation—The Rev. Jim Bakker, the fundamentalist minister sent to jail for cheating his faithful of $160 million, has served his time in contemplation. Now that he's out, his lawyer tells the *Charlotte Observer* that Bakker's future ministry "won't be a right-wing Republican commitment. There will be a strong core of calling for justice and equality as part of the gospel. You'll see a Bible-believing liberal Democrat."

Holes in polls—It isn't the only poll that's been seriously subjected to scrutiny among the hundreds of confidently *now you know* opinion surveys published every year. But errors have been revealed in a 1992 Roper poll purporting to show that as many as 22 percent—one of every five Americans—believe that the Nazi Holocaust never happened. This result was so stunning that the Roper organization, conceding that it had distorted the phrasing of a question it asked in 1992, tried again.

Using a more straightforward question, a Roper rerun in March found that a mere 1 percent of poll respondents believed the Holocaust had never happened, that 8 percent were "unsure" and that 91 percent were certain it did happen.

The revised survey question: "Does it seem possible to you that the Nazi extermination of the Jews never happened, or do you feel certain it happened?" The 1992 question, with its double negative, was: "Does it seem possible or does it seem impossible to you that the Nazi extermination of the Jews never happened?" To that question, Roper now says, "many may have given an answer just the opposite of what they meant."

Critics of today's live-by-the-polls mentality say that happens frequently.

Have panel, will travel—After the JFK Assassination Records Review Board (ARRB) sets up shop in September with as many as 25 staffers under its new executive director, David Marwell (see FYI, Aug. 1), most of the public hearings held by the five-member board will be convened in D.C. But some will be scheduled around the country. Decisions to "reach out to groups that have information" and to extend the board's work until at least October 1996 were made at its second public meeting in Washington on July 12. More later.

Why banks like ATMs—The automatic teller machines (ATMs) that offer bank customers drive-in and after-hours service not only save banks $2.3 billion a year in human teller wage and paperwork costs, they also generate $2.5 billion for the banks in customer user fees, according to the Consumer Federation of America. After deducting the banks' ATM-equipment, installation and upkeep costs, the study estimates a national ATM profit of $2 billion a year.

The consumer group recommends using only your own bank's ATMs, most of which so far impose no user fee. The banks' profit-making transaction charges, averaging 95 cents to $1.10 per customer use, come when you use the so-called "off-us" ATMs of other banks.

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ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

UNDER ATTACK

The President Has Made Important Progress —But We're Not Shown Much of It

Economic gains ____ 1
Social programs ____ 2
Adopt the O.J. assumptions ____ 3
FYI ____ 4

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